

George Wither and Surrey Politics, 1642–1649

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George Wither (1588–1667) has been described as ‘one of the strangest and certainly one of the most completely misunderstood men of the seventeenth century’.¹ As a poet, he is best remembered for his early pastoral verse, but his literary reputation has suffered because of the poor quality of much of his later work.² This work tends, however, to concentrate on many of the important political and religious issues of the English revolution, and is of considerable historical interest. Although in 1628 Wither proclaimed his unfailing obedience to the king, by 1651 he was writing hymns to be sung on the anniversary of the king’s execution, to commemorate

the Day, whereon our Yoke
Of Norman Bondage, first was broke;
And, England from her chains made free.³

It is only recently that historians and literary critics have come to take a serious interest in Wither’s Civil War writings, and to appreciate the significance of his contribution to the development of radical thought in the English revolution.⁴ Less attention has, as yet, been paid to his political activities and to his involvement in the disputes which beset the parliamentary party during the sixteen-forties. Wither was as much a participant as observer in the Civil War, and it can be argued that the increasingly radical tone of his writings owed much to his experiences of wartime political conflicts, in particular the lengthy and often complex struggles between Sir Richard Onslow and his ‘well-affected’ opponents for control of Surrey’s parliamentary administration.

Wither was living on a small estate at Wanborough in west Surrey at the outbreak of war.⁵ He lent £20 on the propositions, and on 8 September 1642 received a commission as captain of a troop of horse.⁶ He was later to claim that he was the first ‘who, in those parts where he lived, contributed his goods, and ingaged his person, for the publike safety’.⁷

The decision to side with parliament in 1642 was in many ways consistent with his long-held desire to portray himself as an uncompromising enemy of tyranny and popery.⁸ His early satirical and prophetic poetry had contained trenchant social criticism and attacks on court corruption, and he had suffered imprisonment for his outspoken views.⁹

Wither served as a captain in the parliamentary forces from September 1642 until he resigned his commission twelve months later.¹⁰ It has often been assumed that he raised his own troop of horse and paid for it through the sale of his estate.¹¹ Wither's troop was, in fact, raised by Surrey's deputy lieutenants in the middle and west divisions of the county, and the first payments to troopers were made five days before he received his commission.¹² The initiative appears to have been taken by Anthony Fane of Kingston, the the most active of Surrey's leading parliamentarians in the early months of the war.¹³ Wither was later to claim that there had been opposition to his own selection as captain, particularly, he believed, from the MP and west Surrey deputy lieutenant Sir Richard Onslow.¹⁴ Wither's claim was corroborated in a hostile pamphlet of 1646, which also suggested that he had been appointed 'contrary to the motion of many well affected, honest and Religious men'.¹⁵

Onslow's apparent unease over Wither's appointment suggests that there were growing tensions in Surrey over the employment in positions of authority of activists from outside the ranks of the county's leading gentry. Wither was born in Hampshire, of a minor gentry family, and he had lived in Surrey for less than ten years; he possessed no freehold land in the county.¹⁶ Wither was later to accuse Onslow of seeking to appoint as captain the son-in-law of William Muschamp of East Horsley, who in August had been nominated as a royalist commissioner of array.¹⁷ Onslow's preferred choice, he claimed, 'became soone after, a Commander for the King'. On taking command of his troop, Wither cashiered his lieutenant and cornet, both of whom he suspected of royalist sympathies, and who, he maintained, had originally been recommended by Onslow.¹⁸

Wither's hostility towards Onslow was intensified by his experiences at Farnham castle, which he was ordered to secure on 14 October 1642.¹⁹ The castle's defensive works were poor, and Wither was short of men and supplies, having with him, he complained, only 'about two squadrons of a Troope halfe armed', and 'a few irresolute Voluntiers, of my owne procuring, by entreatie'.²⁰ In his commission as commander of the castle, Wither was instructed to receive his orders from Onslow and his fellow deputy, Nicholas Stoughton, and he was clearly indignant at having to be 'altogether ordered by the discretion of others'. His requests for assistance were, he suspected, 'then supposed, but the needlesse impertinencies of a Captaine, more officious then was cause'.²¹

Wither's tenure at Farnham was short-lived. The castle was abandoned under orders from London early in November, when the king's forces entered Surrey.²² Wither and the Surrey troop were ordered to Kingston and then to Turnham Green, and on 15 November they were sent into Kent to raise contributions from suspected delinquents.²³ They did not return to Surrey until the following March.²⁴ The arrival of the king's forces in November enabled the county's royalists to rally in support of the king. Farnham was seized by the poet John Denham, who had recently been appointed sheriff of Surrey; it came to serve as a base for raising contributions and for mounting raids on the estates of parliamentarians.²⁵ Of the Surrey parliamentarians who were plundered in November 1642, it was Wither who claimed to have suffered the most severe losses. An inventory taken by his neighbours estimated that his losses, which included provisions he had prepared for the Farnham garrison, and his books and papers, were in excess of £2,000.²⁶

It was in the aftermath of the royalist incursion into Surrey that Sir Richard Onslow emerged as the undisputed leader of the parliamentary cause in the county, Anthony Fane having died of wounds sustained at the recapture of Farnham.²⁷ The widespread plunder by royalists had provoked a reaction in favour of the cautious policies espoused by Onslow. The MP's local standing, combined with his influence at Westminster, ensured that he was best placed to persuade the Surrey gentry that local divisions were most likely to be healed, and order restored, through the establishment of a moderate parliamentary administration. Several prominent Surrey parliamentarians, including George Evelyn of Wotton and Sir William Elyott of Godalming, had wavered in their allegiance when the royalist forces arrived, and it was later alleged that 'most of the Gentry of Surrey' had gone to the king during his stay in the county.²⁸ Such men would clearly be grateful for the conciliatory policies pursued by Onslow, who appreciated the need to encourage the acquiescence or cooperation of those who were at least potential supporters of the king. Both Evelyn and Elyott were later to serve as committee-men in Surrey, and Onslow was to gain a reputation for protecting local inhabitants whose actions might have laid them open to sequestration or imprisonment.²⁹ Wither would come to see Onslow as 'the greatest Favourer of Delinquents, and the most bitter and implacable Enemy to them, who are eminently Well-affected to the Parliament, of any man in Surrey', while at least one Civil War royalist would praise him for the care he took to 'prevent and stop (to his utmost capacity) the rapines and oppressions of those times of Blood and Violence'.³⁰

The moderate and localist character of the Onslow regime became evident when Surrey's parliamentarians successfully opposed moves to

create a south-eastern association in the spring of 1643.³¹ Attempts to raise five hundred dragoons in the county, to be financed out of the estates of delinquents, papists, bishops, prebendaries and pluralists, also came to nothing.³² Wither's troop, which returned from Kent in March 1643, remained unpaid for lengthy periods; by 10 May, the troop's arrears had since 23 January risen to £1,327 4s.³³ Wither was able to borrow £700 to pay his troop, on the strength of a warrant from the Committee of Safety for payment of the arrears out of Surrey's sequestrations revenues, but this warrant was never honoured, and Wither never succeeded in repaying the loan or the interest which accrued.³⁴ It was not until the troop was absorbed into Essex's army that regular, though still inadequate, payments began to be made.³⁵

The most serious challenge to Sir Richard Onslow's authority came on 27 July 1643, when, at the height of political and military crisis, parliament acted to strengthen its control of Surrey by remodelling the county committee and enabling it to associate with other counties. Control of the militia passed from the deputy lieutenants to the new committee.³⁶ Onslow and his allies were forced to share power on this 'Committee for the Safety of Surrey' with a group of militant parliamentarians led by Sir John Maynard of Tooting.³⁷ Wither, who was appointed to several Surrey committees after he resigned his commission in September 1643, was to become the most effective propagandist for this group, in opposition to the moderate and localist committee-men associated with Onslow.³⁸

Wither's *Mercurius Rusticus* appeared anonymously in October 1643, in anticipation of the creation of a south-eastern association.³⁹ The proposed associated brigade should, Wither argued, become an offensive force, and should act to secure those parts 'which either will not or dare not associate'; it should continue the offensive so that 'the next bordering sheire wil shortly petition to unite it selfe to them to prevent being the seat of war, and so the next, and the next, till all come in'.⁴⁰ Farnham's importance for the defence of London and the associated counties was also emphasised.⁴¹

Wither warned against those in authority who, while appearing to support the idea of an association, secretly worked against it. He claimed also that the 'greatest enemies and hinderers of setling the Militia in a fit posture for the publike safety' were 'some Deputy Lieutenants and such as are authorized to order the same'; few people met more frequently or seemed to 'employ themselves more zealously in that businesse then some of them that are more mischievous thereunto'.⁴² The belief that the parliamentary cause was threatened most by those who 'give it, unperceiv'd, and secret blowes' had particular potency in 1643, and was

to be a constant theme in Wither's Civil War writings; it was clearly influenced by his experiences in Surrey. In his poem *Campo-Musae*, for instance, which appeared at the beginning of December, Wither suggested for the first time that the loss of Farnham in 1642 was connected with the fact that

among us, be
Some, that doe walk our wayes, with other mindes,
With other hopes, and purposes, then we.⁴³

He returned to the subject of Farnham in March 1644, in *Se Defendendo*. This pamphlet, which was almost certainly written at the instigation of Sir John Maynard, was intended primarily as a vindication of Wither's conduct while in command of the castle.⁴⁴ He reiterated his belief, already hinted at in *Campo-Musae*, that 'it was by the unfaithfulnesse, negligence, or, at least, the ignorance, of some body, that the publike safety was violated, in the desertion of Farnham-Castle'.⁴⁵ Although he made no direct accusation, he printed in full his commission as commander at Farnham, which had placed him in a subordinate position to Sir Richard Onslow and Nicholas Stoughton; he had, he emphasised, been forced

to be altogether ordered by the discretion of others, and subjecting me to waite absolutely upon their Pleasure, for Forces, or Supplies, and to be regulated, from time to time, according to their Orders, whatsoever neglect or extremity should happen.⁴⁶

As Wither was later to point out, by clearing himself of any blame for the loss of Farnham, he 'thereby gave those who were unsatisfied, occasion to seeke further, and lay the fault where it was'.⁴⁷

Se Defendendo was concerned with much more than the defence of its author's reputation. Farnham castle had, in July 1643, been placed under the command of Colonel Samuel Jones, a London merchant and ally and kinsman of Sir John Maynard.⁴⁸ Jones's regiment of eight hundred men was maintained initially by revenue from the fifth and twentieth part assessments levied by the Committee for the Safety of Surrey.⁴⁹ By February 1644, income from this source had become wholly inadequate, and a new weekly assessment of £300 was imposed on the county to pay the garrison.⁵⁰ Localist complaints about the costs of maintaining the Farnham garrison were treated sympathetically by Onslow and his supporters, who resented Jones's independence and sought to regain some measure of control over the castle.⁵¹ Efforts were also made by the Onslow faction to restore to Surrey's deputy lieutenants the military powers that had been lost to the Committee for the Safety of Surrey.⁵² Wither's determination to show that Onslow and Stoughton were at least in part

to blame for the earlier loss of Farnham, and that it would therefore be unwise to allow them to assume new positions of military responsibility, must be seen in the context of their involvement in the campaign against Jones and his allies.

The conflicts between the Onslow and Maynard factions came to a head during the summer of 1644, when the county forces of Surrey took part in the siege of Basing. Onslow and his fellow deputies succeeded in temporarily reasserting their authority, and Onslow assumed command of the Surrey forces at Basing. When reinforcements were raised in June and early July, it was made clear that they were to receive their orders from the county's deputy lieutenants rather than the committee.⁵³ The county committee was also remodelled at this time. The last warrant from the Committee for the Safety of Surrey was signed on 20 May; thereafter committee warrants were issued in the name of the 'Committee at Kingston'.⁵⁴

Some gains were made by Onslow's opponents on 9 July, when six new justices of the peace were appointed to the Surrey bench, including Maynard, Jones and Wither.⁵⁵ 9 July was also the date of Wither's *The Speech Without Doore*, in which he spelled out the means necessary to raise 'a competent power' to bring the war to a speedy end through the pursuit of outright victory.⁵⁶ This was an uncompromising manifesto which gave vivid expression to the concerns of the well-affected, those activists who had come to interpret national political divisions in terms of binary oppositions, who equated the parliamentary cause with God's cause, and who rejected any suggestion of a compromise peace.⁵⁷ Wither warned against the adoption of 'a compassion, offensive to God, and destructive to our selves'; parliament should 'endeavour unanimously to destroy or disable Gods enemies and our own', rather than be 'unmercifull to our selves and our posterity, by nourishing a foolish hope to reconcile God and Belial'. He called for the speedy punishment of delinquents and the removal of neuters from public office.⁵⁸

For Wither, who was still trying to recover his losses from plunder, the war provided an opportunity for effecting far-reaching changes in society, with the well-affected being rewarded for their sacrifices from the confiscated estates and offices of their enemies. He envisaged the creation of a new landed elite, whose descendants would inherit estates more honourably gained than those 'gotten, or descended from those conquests, which were heretofore made by the spoile of Countreys, invaded meerly out of ambition or covetuousnesse'. Wither saw no reason why recalcitrant royalists should not be deprived of their titles and rank as well as their lands; why, he asked, should they not be made poor, or forced to become

Peasants (a degree, to which honest men are borne, and too good for these) some of them being made Lords and Knights for attempting to enslave Free-men? And the rest having abused their honours, dignities, and gentility, to bring whole Nations into Villenage?⁵⁹

Once again, Wither reserved his most trenchant criticism for those, who 'seeming to be with us', are 'secretly against us'. It was, Wither maintained, crucial that action be taken to prevent 'their politick-ends, who by abideing in the Parliament, and by seeming to comply with it, will else more hazard our safety, then all they who are in open hostility against us'.⁶⁰

The pressing arrears of the Farnham garrison provided Onslow's opponents with the incentive to try once more to seize control of Surrey's administrative machine. On 10 July Sir William Waller warned the Committee of Both Kingdoms that Colonel Jones's regiment was in danger of being disbanded because of delays in the collection of taxes in Surrey.⁶¹ Six days later, Sir John Maynard was present at the Committee at Kingston when Sackford Gunson, the treasurer of Surrey's middle division, was ordered to pay Jones £200; on 24 and 25 July the committee examined Jones's accounts and ordered that his regiment's arrears be 'speedily discharged'.⁶² Further orders were made for the trebling of the association taxes, to help clear the arrears of the association troops under Captains Jervoise and Saville.⁶³

A direct challenge to Onslow's authority was mounted when attempts were made to remove the forces of the east and middle divisions from under his command, by dividing them from the west Surrey forces and remodelling them into a separate regiment with their own colonel. The most detailed account of these moves was given later by Wither, when he claimed that he had been 'freely, and unanimously nominated for Colonell, by the Committee for the Militia for Surrey (being a very full Committee sitting at Kingston)'; on 7 August he was ordered by the committee to 'take charge of all Forces, then raised, and to be raised, in the East, and middle Divisions of Surrey'.⁶⁴ Wither never succeeded in assuming control of these forces. Surviving committee warrants from 7 August indicate that orders were made to Sackford Gunson to pay John Withie of London for supplying colours; Gunson's accounts show that these were for the regiment subsequently commanded by Edmund Jordan of Charlwood.⁶⁵

Wither had, he later emphasised, been nominated without Onslow's consent.⁶⁶ It is possible that Jordan emerged as a compromise candidate; he had already served as senior officer of the forces of the east and middle divisions at Arundel and Basing, he was present at the committee meeting

on 7 August, and he seems to have tried to steer a middle course between the opposing Surrey factions.⁶⁷ The episode undoubtedly exacerbated the divisions among Surrey's parliamentarians. As Wither was later to claim, Onslow

could never after be at quiet, untill he had contrived the new modelling of the Militia, there, according to his owne fancie; For, thereupon he procured the reducement thereof under the Lieutenancie again, by which &c.⁶⁸

Although Onslow's authority in the county had been damaged, he was able to regain control of the Kingston committee before the end of the month. He is known to have returned from Basing to attend committee meetings on 13 and 22 August, while Maynard's faction were still dominant.⁶⁹ The last occasion on which Maynard and Wither are known to have been present was 27 August, when further orders for payments to Jones were made.⁷⁰ Thereafter Onslow succeeded in rallying his supporters, and in engineering a purge to rid the committee of his most persistent critics. Wither was later to complain that he had been ousted by those 'who found him most unusefull for their designes', and that 'he and they who stood in the first breach, and bore the first shock of Tyranny, were justled out of employment'.⁷¹

The extent of Sir Richard Onslow's ascendancy in the autumn of 1644 is indicated by the committee's treatment of Wither in his attempts to hold on to the Surrey estate of the royalist Edward Andrews. Wither had seized this estate in March 1643, together with those of John Denham and Stanislaus Browne, on the strength of a House of Commons order for the recovery of his losses from plunder.⁷² Control of Denham's property at Egham had been lost as early as May 1643, when the Commons granted Ann Denham permission to enter the house during her pregnancy; having regained possession, she delivered it up to Thomas Knollys, who had a rival claim to the estate.⁷³ Browne's estate at Pirbright, where the rents were supposed to have been collected on Wither's behalf by the county's sequestrations collectors, yielded only £10 between July 1643 and March 1645.⁷⁴ Wither came increasingly to believe that his attempts to recoup his losses were being frustrated locally, by committee members and sequestrations officials who put the interests of their royalist neighbours before those of the 'best affected'.⁷⁵

Edward Andrews returned from the king's quarters in 1644, most probably in April or May.⁷⁶ Wither maintained that Andrews had returned only with the intention of capturing him and betraying him to the king's forces, and not, as Andrews claimed, in order to make his peace with parliament and compound for his estate.⁷⁷ Andrews was

arrested and imprisoned in Farnham castle as a spy, and was later to claim that it was only through Onslow's intervention that he escaped a court martial; he was also to credit Onslow with enabling him to recover his estate 'when the hopes of George Withers had devoured it'.⁷⁸ As Wither remarked,

Friends he found (as most Malignants do)
So forward our Ill-willers to protect,
So pow'rfull, and withall, so cunning too,
Their ends, by faire pretences, to effect.⁷⁹

Wither's claim that his losses had exceeded £2,000 was questioned by the Kingston committee in November 1644, following the removal of Maynard and his supporters. Witnesses were produced by Andrews to depose that most of the goods inventoried by Wither's neighbours in 1642 had in fact been sold before his house was plundered. The committee supported Andrews, and agreed with him that Wither's losses were 'not a quarter' of the amount claimed. In their report to the Speaker of the Commons, Onslow and his colleagues made clear their belief that 'Capitaine Withers is fully satisfied for his losse'.⁸⁰ The committee's action could only serve to heighten Wither's doubts about the motives of Surrey's leading parliamentarians. In July Wither had spoken of his hope that delinquents might be forced to become peasants and be barred from being 'reputed gentlemen'. Now he was obliged to witness a royalist being restored to his estate with the support of the Surrey committee and the assistance of the county forces.⁸¹ On 12 April 1645 the Committee for Compounding proposed a fine of £60 for Andrews; the Commons accepted a fine of one hundred marks in August.⁸² Despite Wither's continued protests, and his claim that Andrews had seriously undervalued his estate, Andrews was granted a pardon in May 1646.⁸³

Frequent appeals to parliament and the Committee of Both Kingdoms were made by the opposing Surrey factions in the autumn of 1644. On 19 September, Onslow and his supporters addressed a letter to the Commons containing articles against Maynard and Colonel Jones, and calling for Jones's removal from Farnham. The letter was read in the House on 24 September, and was accompanied by a supporting petition from Surrey ministers.⁸⁴ Jones's allies responded with a petition presented on 18 October, and the committee's articles against Jones were answered with what Sir Simonds D'Ewes called 'great false imputations upon the Gentlemen of Surrey'.⁸⁵

The October petition was only one of several from the counties around London to demand the purging of local committees, the disarming of delinquents and neuters, and the strengthening of the power of the

well-affected.⁸⁶ Although these petitions have attracted little attention from historians, it is clear that they were of much more than local significance, and that their contribution to the widespread agitation for the reform of parliament's military and administrative machine was substantial.⁸⁷ Links had, by the autumn of 1644, been established between the well-affected of Surrey, Kent, Sussex and London, and it is evident from the contents of the petitions from these counties that some form of common programme was evolving.⁸⁸ At least one of these petitions, the Kentish petition of 18 November, echoed several of the arguments raised in Wither's *The Speech Without Doore*, including the demand that parliament's soldiers should be rewarded at the end of the war out of the proceeds from delinquents' estates.⁸⁹

Wither was emerging as a leading spokesman for the well-affected. His *Letters of Advice*, which appeared at the beginning of November, was dedicated to the electors of London, Westminster, Surrey and Hampshire, and was intended to be read by voters throughout the kingdom.⁹⁰ This pamphlet, which was one of the first to justify public criticism of trust-breaking MPs, was published in the expectation that recruiter elections were soon to be called. In a lengthy postscript, Wither argued that it was the duty of voters not only to take the utmost care in electing representatives, but also to keep 'a watchfull eye over their demeanours, both in their private, and publike duties, and actions'; MPs could be 'called to account' by their electors, and, if necessary, 'be purged, or removed'.⁹¹ The law of *salus populi* was invoked to support the argument that members of parliament were as accountable for their actions as the king: the right to watch over individual MPs, and to report them if they abused their trust, was the people's 'priviledge by the supreme Law, called *Salus-Populi*'; any person who

goes about to take from you the benefit of this Law, is not onely a Traitor in the highest degree; but (against him so endeavouring) doth make also every thing, without exception, to be lawfull, which is necessarie to the establishment and preservation thereof.⁹²

Despite Wither's insistence that parliament would support the well-affected in their campaigns against trust-breaking politicians, the Surrey well-affected failed in their attempts to wrest control of the county from Sir Richard Onslow. The October petition in favour of Colonel Jones was declared a breach of privilege, and a Commons committee was appointed to identify its authors.⁹³ The Committee of Both Kingdoms, in its determination to ensure that the parliamentary cause in Surrey was not wholly undermined by these debilitating disputes, decided as early as 29 October to review the 1643 ordinance which had led to the

establishment of the Committee for the Safety of Surrey.⁹⁴ The local divisions were exacerbated by Maynard's renewed attempts in the autumn to revive this committee as a rival to the Committee at Kingston.⁹⁵ Wither was among those who are known to have attended some of its meetings.⁹⁶ On 13 November, the Committee of Both Kingdoms reported to the Commons that the public service in Surrey was 'much prejudiced by the clashing Powers of the Two Committees in that County, that derived Authority from several Ordinances granted to that County'.⁹⁷ A Commons committee was authorised to review all ordinances in force in Surrey and to bring in an ordinance 'for settling the Powers and Commands in that County'.⁹⁸

Wither's allegations about the 1642 'betrayal of Farnham Castle' were revived by Maynard in January and March 1645, and damaging accusations of delinquency were levelled against several county committee members, but it was the Onslow faction which succeeded in gaining the backing of parliament and the Committee of Both Kingdoms.⁹⁹ While Onslow and his supporters may not have been as active in pursuit of outright victory as their rivals, their sensitivity to local concerns ensured at least that regular contributions could be raised in the county without fear of provoking resistance.¹⁰⁰ Onslow had also won the support of the earl of Northumberland, who, as lord lieutenant of Surrey, had good reason to welcome the moves to restore the powers of the lieutenancy. Northumberland and his allies at Westminster were instrumental in promoting the legislation which was to favour Onslow at the expense of his more militant opponents.¹⁰¹ Colonel Jones was persuaded to resign his command on 29 March, and the Farnham garrison was reduced in size. The committees of Surrey and Hampshire were permitted to nominate his successor.¹⁰² Jones's departure was followed by the introduction of a new ordinance for Surrey, which passed both houses on 1 July. The Surrey ordinance was a triumph for Sir Richard Onslow: a single county committee was established, with a subordinate committee in each of Surrey's three divisions, and the militia was again to be run along traditional lines by the deputy lieutenants.¹⁰³

For George Wither, these moves represented the betrayal of the hopes of the well-affected:-

Nay, this new Junto, doth so strong become,
By their conferring Offices and Places,
By adding-to, and by removing-from,
By secret-commendations and disgraces;
And by deluding of a simple crew,
(Who, by these Polititians, may be brought

Their own perdition fiercely to pursue)
 That, they have almost compast what they sought;
 And, they will gain the rest, if not prevented;
 For, by their diligence, they have removed,
 Undone, discouraged, or discontented,
 Most men, whose faithfulness was most approved:
 And, they, whose power, these cannot yet destroy,
 Do act with small successe, and little joy.¹⁰⁴

A degree of resistance was maintained by Surrey's sub-committee of accounts, which had been created in October 1644 and was dominated by Sir John Maynard and his allies.¹⁰⁵ The sub-committee was to remain a constant irritant to the Committee at Kingston, particularly after George Wither secured for it the county's sequestration accounts and papers, but it could never seriously hope to rival the authority of the main committee.¹⁰⁶ The final attempt by the Maynard faction to challenge for power came in the autumn of 1645, when recruiter elections were eventually held in Surrey. A second, revised edition of Wither's *Letters of Advice* was brought out at the beginning of September, in time to influence the outcome of the elections. In a new postscript, Wither sought to remind voters of how important it was for them to be 'more warie in giving voyces than they have beene'.¹⁰⁷ The bookseller George Thomason obtained his copy of Wither's pamphlet on 3 September, the day the Commons ordered writs to be issued for elections at Gatton and Reigate.¹⁰⁸ At the Reigate election Sir Matthew Brend, an ally of Maynard and fellow-member of the accounts sub-committee, failed to defeat George Evelyn of Wotton, a close associate of Onslow.¹⁰⁹ Evelyn's election was confirmed by the House in spite of complaints that he had raised horses for the king.¹¹⁰ In November, Wither was invited to stand against his old rival Nicholas Stoughton at Guildford. When it became clear to Wither that a majority of the freemen had 'irrevocably passed their assents' for his rival, he withdrew from the election, to avoid suffering 'a needles affront, and my Friends . . . some disadvantages by appearing for mee in vaine'.¹¹¹ Neither Wither nor Brend would ever be elected to parliament; when Sir John Maynard entered parliament in 1647, it was for the Cornish borough of Lostwithiel rather than for any Surrey seat.¹¹²

Wither had claimed in *Letters of Advice* that parliament would welcome information against those who were 'unfaithfull in their Trust'.¹¹³ He displayed less confidence in his *Vox Pacifica* of 1645, when he complained that

'Tis oft, more safe, to let the Commonweale
 Be ruin'd, or betraid, then to oppose

A Traytor; or with freedome to reveale
That, which your vowes oblige you to disclose.¹¹⁴

It was, however, in the spirit of *Letters of Advice* that he launched his most sustained attack on Sir Richard Onslow in *Justitiarius Justificatus*. This pamphlet, which appeared in April 1646, was prompted by Wither's recent removal from the Surrey bench.¹¹⁵ Wither maintained that it was his duty according to the covenant to warn against those whose actions endangered the public safety. Onslow was openly accused of having taken upon himself 'the Supremacie over all Causes, and all Persons Ecclesiasticall and Civill, within his Dominions'; he had undermined the public service through his relentless pursuit of self-interest and through his increasing reliance upon the support of delinquents and neuters. In Surrey, as elsewhere, those

who never shewed themselves for the Parliament, but by compulsion (or, untill it began, evidently to prevail) are, now, become powerfull among us; yea, they are politikely ingratiated, indeered, and brought insensibly in, to strengthen a Party against those, who (from the beginning) have acted faithfully, and freely, for the publike.

Onslow was blamed once more for the loss of Farnham in 1642, and for the 'manifold charges, disturbances, and divisions' that had followed.¹¹⁶ In *Vox Pacifica* Wither had singled out for criticism those Surrey politicians

Who think, the Publike-Trust belongs, of right,
To so much by the yeare: These, have so long
Inslav'd the people; that themselves disgrac'd
They do conceive, if, to do right or wrong,
Inferiours, in Authority be plac'd:
And, these have lately censur'd it unfit,
That, with so reverend a thing, as Wealth,
Such strangers, now, as Honesty and Wit,
Should called be, to serve the Common-wealth
Or lend a helping hand, to save what they
Have took a course to ruine, many a day.¹¹⁷

Now he attacked the 'Men of large fortunes, and little conscience' who had

so long engrossed places of Power, and Trust, and made such use of Magistracie, for private and sinister ends, that, they have destroyed our Peace, and indangered all our Freedomes.

It was, Wither argued, time for 'the stout, faithfull, and prudent Citizens,

and the men of midling-Fortunes, who were heretofore scorned and oppressed', to be brought into employment, so that their

courage, wisdom, pietie, and integritie, might help our honourable Senators, to redeeme us from those miseries, and slaveries, into which the Cannibals of the Court, and the Sagamores of the Countrey, have by their pride, and perfidiousnesse, lately brought us.¹¹⁸

Justitiarius Justificatus was brought to the attention of the House of Commons by Denzil Holles on 10 April 1646; Wither was summoned to the bar of the House as a delinquent and his pamphlet was referred to the Committee of Examinations.¹¹⁹ Despite this prompt action, Onslow's standing in parliament and the county was endangered by the publication of Wither's pamphlet. This was chiefly because the case came to assume party-political overtones which were quite unrelated to the politics of the local conflicts. The Surrey well-affected had always been a loose coalition united by their antipathy towards Onslow: as Wither was to emphasise in his *Opobalsamum Anglicanum*,

Some of us like one Party; some, the other;
Some of us, are not much in love with either.¹²⁰

Denzil Holles was a friend and kinsman of Onslow, and it is likely to have been this that prompted him to seek to defend the Surrey MP's reputation in the Commons.¹²¹ Onslow was politically much closer in 1646 to the middle group in parliament than to Holles's presbyterians, and in the previous year he had relied upon the support of senior middle group politicians to secure the passage of the Surrey ordinance through both houses.¹²² Holles's support for Onslow appears, however, to have caused the House to divide along party lines when Wither's case was considered again on 7 August. When the House divided over whether to put to a vote the question of fining Wither, the tellers for the yeas were Holles and Sir Philip Stapleton; the tellers for the noes Sir Arthur Haselrig and Oliver Cromwell.¹²³

Lawrence Whittaker, who reported from the Committee of Examinations on 7 August, complained in his diary that the proceedings against Wither lasted 'this whole day till neare 4 in the afternoone'; John Harington referred to the business as 'a long difficult report', and noted that the votes against Wither were obtained 'with difficulty'.¹²⁴ Onslow's supporters won the division over the vote to fine Wither by the narrow margin of 65 votes to 54.¹²⁵ Wither had responded to the original charges by accusing Onslow of having sent £500 to the king at Oxford, and his attempts to find witnesses to this had led to further charges against him of conspiracy and subornation of witnesses.¹²⁶ Although Wither was fined

£500 for having aspersed and scandalised Onslow in *Justitiarius Justificatus*, the subsidiary charges were not put to a vote.¹²⁷ Both Whittaker and Harington suggest that the business was put off till further notice, and no attempt to revive it ever seems to have been made.¹²⁸

Wither was, however, committed to prison and remained in custody until 20 October 1647.¹²⁹ This was almost certainly the consequence of his inability to pay the £500 fine. Wither's arrears stood at £1,681 15s 8d. in 1646, and he was still being charged interest on the £700 that he had borrowed in 1643 to keep his troop in the field.¹³⁰ His losses from plunder had still to be fully recovered.¹³¹ He had, he complained, been imprisoned 'for what the State owed'.¹³²

Wither's writings during his imprisonment took on an increasingly militant tone. *Opobalsamum Anglicanum*, which appeared in August 1646, demonstrated clearly his conviction that parliament had become so corrupted by its trust-breaking members that a purge was urgently required.¹³³ Adopting the rhetoric of the 'Well-affected-Partie', Wither warned the 'perfidious-Trustees' that

We hated Tyrannie, though in the King;
And, will not brook, in you, the selfe-same thing.¹³⁴

The faithful members of parliament were urged to

purge, or cure, or cut away
Your Gangreev'd-Members, with what speed you may.¹³⁵

He attacked parliament's 'packt and false Committees', the Committee of Examinations in particular:—

Oh! how you, ride and run
And plot, when Informations are begun
Against a Member! Be it right, or wrong,
How you consult together! how, you throng,
To that Committee, whither they are brought!
How speedily exceptions, forth are sought
Against th'informers? what severity
Are they examin'd with? how partially
Are proofes considered? how slur'd and sleighted!
How are the persons wronged and despight?
How, inhumanly, are they, oft reviled?
How, of their Liberties are they dispoiled?
How are they scandall'd by false imputations,
Of base Conspiracies, and subornations?
How frequently, are spread, to their disgrace

(By men of seeming gravity, and place)
 Injurious rumors? which ev'n they who speak them
 Know to be false; because, they first did make them?¹³⁶

Although Wither had gained the support of Cromwell and Haselrig in his dispute with Onslow, and was to receive financial assistance during his imprisonment from the MPs John Dixwell and Thomas Westrow, it was with radicals outside parliament that he was now most frequently identified.¹³⁷ His *Letters of Advice* and *Vox Pacifica* were known to John Lilburne, who quoted from the work of 'that Gallant man, Major George Withers', in his *Englands Birth-Right Justified* of October 1645.¹³⁸ The anonymous pamphlet *Englands Miserie and Remedie*, which appeared in September 1645, and has been called the first work of these years to advance an unambiguous theory of popular sovereignty, quoted at length the concluding passage from *Vox Pacifica* which ended with the warning that

there is, on earth, a greater-thing,
 Then, an unrighteous Parliament, or King.¹³⁹

Like John Lilburne, Wither was anxious to draw wider lessons from his personal experiences and from the local conflicts in which he had been involved, and to stress 'what neare relations the publike-grievances, and the private-sufferings of honest men, have one to another'.¹⁴⁰ As he insisted in a petition of October 1647,

noe man is bound silently to suffer in, or for that Comon-wealth, which is soe unequall in her distributions, as not to administer equally, deserved rewards and punishments, to her own Members; much lesse, when shee will finde times to heare; Bread to feed; and bowells to Compassionate her malicious destroyers; and yet hath neither leisure, nor food, nor pitie for them, whoe thought nothing too pretious to be hazarded for her preservation.¹⁴¹

Wither came, in 1649, to support the establishment of the Commonwealth.¹⁴² His attitude towards the king had changed markedly since 1643, when he had suggested that parliament aimed only to lay upon him a 'charitable and restraining-hand'.¹⁴³ By 1645 he had come to acknowledge publicly that in extreme circumstances the king could be removed.¹⁴⁴ Although he continued to hope that this would not become necessary, and suggested even in 1648 that 'a regulated Monarchy' was best for England, he acknowledged that the king's fate was in his own hands and in God's; repentance rather than a personal treaty was needed if the king was to be reconciled to his people.¹⁴⁵ By leaving the final

outcome to providence, Wither could accept that a settlement was possible without Charles:-

If he remaine impenitent, like Saul,
God, from the Throne, shall cast both him, and all
His whole Descent.¹⁴⁶

Wither's initial doubts about the legality of the political changes of 1649 were soon subordinated to the need to recover his arrears and ease his debts;¹⁴⁷ he was certainly in no position to emulate Lilburne's principled stand against the new regime.¹⁴⁸ Wither accepted that most republican of offices, the post of commissioner for the sale of the late king's goods.¹⁴⁹ In his *British Appeals*, a propagandist tract published in 1651 on behalf of the republic, he praised the revolution for

The thrusting of the Proud out of the Throne;
The setting up, of humble men, thereon.¹⁵⁰

The regicide was to be celebrated as a just and open act:

I must confess
It was Gods mercie, and our Happiness
That, he so fell; and, 'twill be to the Glory
Of this our Nation, in their future Story,
That, whereas others have Clandestinely,
By Poyson, or by Murther, secretly,
Remov'd their Tyrants; we, with open face;
By Publick Justice; in a Publick place;
In presence, of his friends, and, in despight
Of all our foes, and ev'ry opposite,
Try'd, Judg'd, and Executed, without fear;
The greatest Tyrant, ever reigning here.¹⁵¹

Wither was able once more to attend county committee meetings in Surrey, and he was reinstated as a Surrey JP; by 1650 he was of the quorum.¹⁵² There was, however, to be no triumph for Wither over his local rivals. The administrative changes in Surrey under the Commonwealth were limited: several of Sir Richard Onslow's allies remained active in local government, and Onslow himself, though secluded from parliament, attended committee meetings and continued to serve as a JP. Under the Protectorate Onslow was to re-emerge as the most powerful political figure in the county.¹⁵³ While Wither remained heavily in debt throughout the 1650s, and failed to secure payment of his arrears, Onslow was able to lay the foundations for his family's pre-eminent position in Surrey.¹⁵⁴

Wither continued to the end to offer conditional support for each Interregnum regime, while bemoaning 'our hypocrisie, our gross partiality, our selfe-seekings, and remissness in doing Justice, and in mercifully relieving the oppressed, the Widows, the Fatherless, and the Friendless'.¹⁵⁵ He was imprisoned after the Restoration; Onslow, ironically, escaped exemption from the Act of Indemnity partly through the intervention of Edward Andrews, the royalist whose Surrey estate he had rescued from Wither's hands in 1644.¹⁵⁶ When Onslow's great-grandson, Speaker Onslow, came to compile a history of his family, his references to Wither confirmed that the latter's undeserved but lasting reputation as 'a low fellow', best known for his 'fanatic poetry and ribald writings almost innumerable', had already firmly been established.¹⁵⁷

Notes

1. W. K. Jordan, *The Development of Religious Toleration in England*, II (London, 1936), p. 412.
2. See, for instance, Allan Pritchard, 'George Wither: the Poet as Prophet', *Studies in Philology*, LIX (1962), pp. 211–30.
3. George Wither, *Britains Remembrancer* (1628), reprint, *Publications of the Spenser Society*, nos 28–9 (Manchester, 1881–82), pp. 457, 533; *idem*, *British Appeals* (1651), p. 49.
4. Christopher Hill, 'George Wither and John Milton', in *Writing and Revolution in Seventeenth-century England* (Brighton, 1985), pp. 133–56; David Norbrook, 'Levelling Poetry: George Wither and the English Revolution, 1642–1649', *English Literary Renaissance*, XXI, 2 (1991), pp. 217–56; *idem*, "'Safest in Storms": George Wither in the 1650s', in David Margolies and Manoula Joannou (eds), *Heart of the Heartless World* (London, 1995), pp. 19–32 (I am indebted to Dr Norbrook for sending me with a copy of this article); Nigel Smith, *Literature and Revolution in England 1640–1660* (New Haven, 1994).
5. P[ublic] R[ecord] O[ffice]. Exchequer, King's Remembrancer, E. 179/186/451.
6. P.R.O. State Papers Domestic, Commonwealth Exchequer Papers, S.P. 28/334 (unfoliated), account book of Richard Wither, f. 4; S.P. 28/267 ff. 145, 151v.
7. H[ouse] of L[ords] R[ecord] O[ffice]. M[ain] P[apers] Series], 1648, 15 Mar., petition of George Wither to House of Lords (c. Oct. 1647: filed at incorrect date).
8. George Wither, *Campo-Musae, or the Field-Musings of Captain George Wither* (1643), provides Wither's most detailed justification of his support for parliament. Cf. Norbrook, 'Levelling Poetry', pp. 226–32.
9. George Wither, *Abuses Stript and Whipt* (1613), repr. in his *Juvenilia* (1622), pp. 85–9, 93–5, 168–71, 176–7; *idem*, *Wither's Motto* (1621; repr. Birmingham, 1814), pp. 57–8, 65, 69; *idem*, *Britains Remembrancer*, pp. 65, 363–8,

- 370, 393, 474, 476, 521-3, 554. Cf. David Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance* (London, 1984), pp. 199, 209-13, 216-19; J. M. French, 'George Wither in Prison', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, XLV (1930), pp. 959-62.
10. P.R.O. S.P.28/253A Book 6 f. 41; S.P. 28/267 ff. 143, 150v.
 11. *Dictionary of National Biography; Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals in the Seventeenth Century*, III, ed. R. L. Greaves and R. Zaller (Brighton, 1984), p. 336.
 12. P.R.O. S.P.28/170 (unfol.), payment book of treasurers at Guildhall, no. 73; S.P. 28/177 (unfol.), accounts of Henry Hastings for Colonel Fane; S.P. 28/267 ff. 149v, 151v; S.P. 28/334 (unfol.), account book of Richard Wither, ff. 7, 7v.
 13. P.R.O. S.P.28/177 (unfol.), accounts of Hastings for Fane. cf. S.P. 28/2A f. 62; S.P. 28/177 (unfol.), Malden parish accounts; S.P. 28/180 (unfol.), Effingham, Little Bookham, Newdigate, Walton-on-Thames, Wandsworth parish accounts (abstracts); G[uilford] M[uniment] R[oom]. Loseley MSS, L.M. Cor. 5/15 (I am grateful to Mr J. R. More Molyneux for permission to cite these MSS); Royal Borough of Kingston Archives. Military Matters, K.H. 1/2/7.
 14. George Wither, *Justitiarius Justificatus: The Justice Justified* (1646), p. 8. Sir Richard Onslow (1601-64) of Knowle in Cranley, knight of the shire for Surrey in the Long Parliament, and, since the death in 1632 of Sir George More of Loseley, one of the most influential figures in west Surrey society.
 15. B[ritish] L[ibrary] E.365(24): *A Letter sent to George Wither, Poetica licentia, Esquire, by a plain dealing friend of his to prevent his future Pseudography* (1646), p. 2.
 16. Wither, *Justitiarius Justificatus*, p. 6; R. F. Bigg-Wither, *Materials for a History of the Wither Family* (Winchester, 1907), p. 89.
 17. Wither, *Justitiarius Justificatus*, p. 8; Northamptonshire Record Office. Finch-Hatton MSS, Finch-Hatton 133.
 18. Wither, *Justitiarius Justificatus*, p. 8; P.R.O. S.P.28/267 f. 150v.
 19. George Wither, *Se Defendendo: A Shield, and Shaft, against Detraction*, pp. 3-4.
 20. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
 21. *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4, 7. The commission is printed in full in *Se Defendendo*.
 22. *Ibid.*, pp. 9-11. cf. B.L. E.242(10): *England's Memorable Accidents*, 7-14 Nov. 1642, p. 74, which tends to confirm Wither's account of his departure from Farnham.
 23. P.R.O. Chancery Proceedings, Series I, C. 2 CHAS I/W. 32/69, Wither v. Knollys et al.; S.P. 28/267 ff. 145, 146, 149v-50, 152-2v, 157; 'Papers relating to proceedings in the county of Kent, 1642-46', ed. R. Almack, *Camden Miscellany*, III (1854), pp. 4-6, 12-13.
 24. P.R.O. S.P.28/267 ff. 145, 146.
 25. B.L. E.128(28): *Speciall Passages and Certain Informations from Severall Places*, 22-29 Nov. 1642, p. 136; E. 242(28): *England's Memorable Accidents*, 21-28 Nov., p. 93; John Rushworth, *Historical Collections* (London, 1721), V, pp. 81-2; Brendan O. Hehir, *Harmony from Discords: A Life of Sir John Denham*

- (Berkeley, 1968), p. 56; H. E. Malden, 'The Civil War in Surrey, 1642', *Surrey Archaeological Collections*, XXII (1909), p. 114.
26. *Speciall Passages*, 22–29 Nov. 1642, p. 132; C[ommons] J[ournals], II, p. 960; Wither, *Se Defendendo*, pp. 9–10. For other instances of plunder, John Gurney, 'The County of Surrey and the English Revolution' (unpub. D.Phil. thesis, Sussex Univ. 1991), pp. 91–3.
 27. B.L. E.129(5): *Speciall Passages*, 29 Nov.–6 Dec. 1642, p. 140; E. 130(10): *Speciall Passages*, 6–13 Dec.; P.R.O. S.P.28/4 f. 264; P.R.O. Prerogative Court of Canterbury, Prob. 11/190 f. 364; S[urrey] R[ecord] O[ffice] Kingston parish registers (transcripts), p. 149.
 28. B.L. Harleian MSS, Harl. MS. 383 f. 207; Bodl[eian Library] Nalson MS. XIV 37; *The Diary of John Evelyn*, ed. E. S. De Beer (Oxford, 1955), I, p. 53.
 29. Gurney, thesis, pp. 368–72, for committee attendance in Surrey.
 30. Wither, *Iustitarius Iustificatus*, p. 11; G. M. R. 173/3/3, Edward Andrews, *Gratitude in Season: Or, A Word for Sir Richard Onslow* (1661), p. 6.
 31. C.J. II, pp. 974, 977; B.L. E.246(39): *Mercurius Aulicus*, 7th week; E. 86(41): *Merc. Aulicus*, 9th week, ending 1 Mar. 1643.
 32. H.L.R.O. M.P. 1642–43, 14 February, draft ordinance for raising 500 draagoons; L[ords] J[ournals], V, p. 606; C.J. II, p. 964.
 33. P.R.O. S.P.28/267 ff. 155, 157.
 34. P.R.O. S.P.28/253A Book 6 f. 41; S.P. 28/267 ff. 152v, 155; H.L.R.O. M.P. 1648, 15 Mar., Wither petition; M. P. 1649, 19 Sept., petition of Wither to House of Commons (c. 1648); George Wither, *Echoes from the Sixth Trumpet* (1665), p. 125; *idem*, *The Petition, and Narrative of Geo. Wither Esq.* (n.d.), pp. 3–5.
 35. P.R.O. S.P.28/1A ff. 123, 211; S.P. 28/8 f. 194; S.P. 28/267 f. 151v.
 36. C.J. III, pp. 171, 180, 182, 183; L.J. VI, pp. 147, 151–2; H.L.R.O. M.P. 1643, 27 Jul., draft Surrey ordinance (19 July); B.L. E.65(22): *An Ordinance of Parliament for the better securing and settling the peace of the county of Surrey*, 27 July 1643.
 37. Sir John Maynard (1592–1658), a former courtier and 'patriot' supporter of Buckingham. Although in 1647 he was to become one of the eleven members impeached by the army, he was also to befriend John Lilburne and to become an active opponent of fen drainage schemes. His political outlook was too complex to warrant the 'conservative' label usually applied to him. I intend to discuss Maynard's political career in a forthcoming article.
 38. Wither resigned his commission at the relief of Gloucester on 13 Sept.: P.R.O. S.P.28/267 ff. 143, 150.
 39. B.L. E.73(2): [George Wither], *Mercurius Rusticus: Or, A Countrey Messenger* (1643). For Wither's authorship, George Wither, *Fides-Anglicana* (1660), p. 92; *idem*, *Echoes*, p. 161.
 40. [Wither], *Mercurius Rusticus*, pp. 4–5.
 41. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
 42. *Ibid.*, pp. 4, 7.
 43. Wither, *Campo-Musae*, pp. 7, 66.
 44. Wither, *Se Defendendo*, p. 3, for the letter from 'J. M.' encouraging Wither

- to defend himself in print. The identification of 'J. M.' with Maynard seems more plausible than with John Milton, for which see Lyle H. Kendall Jr., 'A Letter from John Milton to George Wither', *N[otes] and Q[uieries]*, CXCVIII (1953), p. 473, and the response by J. M. French, *N. and Q.*, CXCIX (1954), p. 472.
45. Wither, *Se Defendendo*, p. 2.
 46. *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4, 5.
 47. Wither, *Justitiarius Justificatus*, p. 9.
 48. P.R.O. S.P.28/8 ff. 75, 77; S.P. 28/177 (unfol.), accounts of Robert Broadbridge; S.P. 28/178 (unfol.), accounts of Colonel Samuel Jones; B.L. Additional MSS, Add. MS. 34, 315 f. 19; Gurney, thesis, pp. 134-6.
 49. P.R.O. S.P.28/29 f. 417; S.P. 28/135 (unfol.), accounts of Col. Jones; S.P. 28/178 (unfol.), accounts of Col. Jones; S.P. 28/180 (unfol.), Capel parish accounts (abstracts); S.P. 28/245 (unfol.), accounts of Richard Wither; S.P. 28/334 (unfol.), account book of Richard Wither, ff. 19v, 20.
 50. P.R.O. S.P.28/244 (unfol.), warrants to high constables of Brixton and Wallington hundreds, 3 Feb. 1644, and to high constables of Kingston and Elmbridge hundreds, 6 Feb.
 51. B.L. Harl. MS. 166 f. 57; Harl. MS. 382 ff. 30, 121, 123; E. 252(30): *A Perfect Diurnall*, 22-29 Apr. 1644, pp. 305-6; E. 43(22): *A Continuation of Certain Speciall and Remarkable Passages*, 18-25 Apr., p. 5; C.J. III, p. 467.
 52. L.J. VI, p. 360; C.J. III, pp. 375-6, 545.
 53. P.R.O. S.P.28/244 (unfol.), warrants to high constables of Elmbridge hundred, 17 June and 3 July 1644.
 54. P.R.O. S.P. Domestic, Charles I, S.P. 16/501/136; S.P. 28/244 (unfol.), committee warrants 1 June 1644 and after.
 55. P.R.O. Chancery, Crown Office Docquet Books, C. 231/6 p. 4.
 56. George Wither, *The Speech Without Doore, Delivered July 9 1644, in the absence of the Speaker, and in the hearing of above 000 0003. persons then present* (1644), p. 2.
 57. Cf. John Morrill, *The Revolt of the Provinces* (2nd edn, London, 1980), pp. 116, 121; David Underdown, "Honest" Radicals in the Counties 1642-1649', in D. H. Pennington and K. Thomas (eds), *Puritans and Revolutionaries* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 190-2.
 58. Wither, *Speech Without Doore*, pp. 9, 13.
 59. *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5, 5-6.
 60. *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 13-14.
 61. C[alendar of] S[tate] P[apers] D[omestic], 1644, pp. 333-4.
 62. P.R.O. S.P.16/502/59; E. 179/187/468A (unfol.), warrant to Richard Wither, 24 July 1644; S.P. 28/135 (unfol.), accounts of Col. Jones.
 63. P.R.O. S.P. 28/244 (unfol.), warrant to high constables of Kingston hundred, 25 July 1644.
 64. Wither, *Justitiarius Justificatus*, p. 9.
 65. P.R.O. S.P. 28/177 (unfol.), accounts of Sackford Gunson; S.P. 28/244 (unfol.), warrant to Gunson, 7 Aug. 1644; H.L.R.O. M.P. 1645, 12 Dec., petition of Col. Edmund Jordan to House of Lords.
 66. Wither claimed that Onslow was prepared to allow him to serve as his lieutenant colonel, which he refused to do: *Justitiarius Justificatus*, p. 9.

- Wither was referred to as Major Wither in late 1644 and after: see P.R.O. S.P. 28/244 (unfol.), certificate of Capt. Ghest, Oct. 1644.
67. P.R.O. S.P. Domestic, Interregnum, Committee for the Advance of Money, S.P. 19/98/91; S.P. 28/244 (unfol.), warrant to Sackford Gunson, 7 Aug. 1644. In 1647 Jordan and John Goodwyn signed the certificate of Wither's military service in Surrey for the Committee of Accounts: SP28/267 f. 145.
 68. Wither, *Justitarius Justificatus*, p. 9.
 69. P.R.O. S.P. 28/244 (unfol.), warrants to Sackford Gunson, 13 and 22 Aug. 1644.
 70. P.R.O. S.P. 28/300 ff. 351-2.
 71. George Wither, *Reasons Humbly Offered* (n.d., c. 1645-46), pp. 2-3; cf. *idem*, *Justitarius Justificatus*, p. 2.
 72. C.J. II, p. 960; P.R.O. C.2 CHAS I/W. 32/69; S.P. Domestic, Interregnum, Committee for Compounding with Delinquents, S.P. 23/132 p. 187; S.P. Domestic, Interregnum, Committee and Commissioners for Indemnity, S.P. 24/86 (unfol.), petition of George Wither, 17 May 1648; Wither, *Se Defendendo*, p. 13; *idem*, *Reasons Humbly Offered*, p. 3.
 73. P.R.O. S.P. Domestic, Interregnum, Committee for the Sequestration of Delinquents' Estates, S.P. 20/1 ff. 50, 54; S.P. 24/2 f. 119; S.P. 24/86 (unfol.), Wither petition; C. 2 CHAS I/W. 32/69; B.L. Harl. MS. 164 ff. 388v-9; C.J. III, p. 80; Wither, *Se Defendendo*, p. 14. cf. Herbert Berry, 'Sir John Denham at Law', *Modern Philology*, LXXI (1973-74), pp. 266-76 (I am grateful to David Norbrook for this reference).
 74. P.R.O. S.P. 23/132 p. 189; S.P. 23/195 p. 77; S.P. 28/214 (unfol.), accounts of Thomas Byrne and Thomas Higginbotham; S.P. 28/218 (unfol.), breveiate of Surrey sequestrations.
 75. [Wither], *Mercurius Rusticus*, p. 7; *idem*, *Se Defendendo*, pp. 13-14; *idem*, *Speech Without Doore*, p. 12.
 76. Wither, *Reasons Humbly Offered*, p. 3; P.R.O. E.179/187/468A (unfol.), Andrews's acquittance for £5 for a horse; S.P. 28/334 (unfol.), account book of Richard Wither, ff. 26v-7.
 77. Wither, *Reasons Humbly Offered*, p. 3; *idem*, *Vox Pacifica* (1645), p. 96.
 78. G. M. R. 173/3/3 pp. 4-5; Wither, *Vox Pacifica*, p. 100.
 79. *Ibid.*, p. 96.
 80. Bodl. Nalson MS. III 152. cf. Wither, *Vox Pacifica*, pp. 98-9; *Letter sent to George Wither*, p. 5. Note that the committee referred to Wither as 'Captain' rather than 'Major'. In 1648 parliament would accept once more Wither's claim that his losses amounted to £2,000: C.J. V, p. 485; L.J. X, p. 115.
 81. Wither, *Vox Pacifica*, p. 100; *Letter sent to George Wither*, p. 6.
 82. P.R.O. S.P. 23/173 p. 57; C.J. IV, p. 237.
 83. P.R.O. S.P. 23/132 p. 187; S.P. 19/21 p. 96; Wither, *Reasons Humbly Offered*, *passim*; *idem*, *Vox Pacifica*, p. 108; C.J. IV, p. 550.
 84. B.L. Harl. MS. 166 f. 124v; C.J. III, pp. 637, 647; E. 256(28): *Perfect Occurrences of Parliament*, 18-25 Oct. 1644.
 85. B.L. Harl. MS. 166 ff. 150-ov; Add. MS. 31,116 f. 167v; C.J. III, p. 669; B.L. E.256(25): *A Perfect Diurnall of some Passages in Parliament*, 14-21 Oct. 1644, p. 511; E. 256(27): *A Diary, or an Exact Journall*, 17-24 Oct, p. 173; *Perfect Occurrences*, 18-25 Oct.

86. E.g. Sussex (16 Oct.): C.J. III, p. 166; London (11 Nov.): C[orporation of L[ondon] R[ecord] O[ffice]. Journals of Common Council, J. Co. Co. 40 ff. 116-16v; C.J. III, p. 693; Kent (14 Nov.): B.L. E.19(11): 'The Kentish Petition' (MSS copy); Dr Williams's Library Journal of Thomas Juxon, MS. 24.50 f. 30; C.J. III, pp. 695-6, 698, 700, 708, 715. cf. B.L. Add. MS. 31,116 ff. 167, 173, 174v; Harl. MS. 166 ff. 149v.
87. I hope to discuss the significance of these petitions in a forthcoming article.
88. For these links, G.M.R. 111/10/2; C.L.R.O. J. Co. Co. 40 ff. 116-16v; B.L. Add. MS. 31,116 ff. 167v, 173; Harl. MS. 166 f. 150.
89. 'The Kentish Petition', f. 1v; Wither, *Speech Without Doore*, pp. 4-5.
90. George Wither, *Letters of Advice Touching the Choice of Knights and Burgesses* (1644). Thomason's copy is dated 2 Nov.; the earl of Salisbury bought a copy on 4 Nov.: Hist. Mss. Comm., *Salisbury MSS*, XXII, p. 383.
91. Wither, *Letters of Advice*, pp. 13, 14.
92. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
93. B.L. Add. MS. 31,116 f. 167v; Harl. MS. f. 150v; C.J. III, pp. 669-70.
94. C.S.P.D. 1644-45, p. 79.
95. P.R.O. S.P. 28/177 (unfol.), accounts of constables of Croydon; S.P. 28/244 (unfol.), warrant to high constables of Wallington hundred, 12 Dec. 1644.
96. P.R.O. S.P. 19/98/90A.
97. C.J. III, p. 694.
98. *Ibid.*, p. 694; B.L. E.256(36): *A Perfect Diurnall of some Passages in Parliament*, 11-18 Nov. 1644, p. 538.
99. P.R.O. S.P. Domestic, Interregnum, Committee for Both Kingdoms, or Derby House Committee, S.P. 21/8 pp. 60, 64, 85, 97, 111; Bodl. Nalson MS. XIV 37.
100. Unlike Sussex, Surrey experienced no club rising; levels of unrest in Surrey were always much lower than in Kent.
101. L.J. VII, p. 469; C.J. IV, p. 183; P.R.O. S.P. 21/8 pp. 10, 49.
102. Bodl. Tanner MS. 60 f. 580; B.L. Add. MS. 31,116 ff. 201v, 203; Harl. MS. 166 ff. 195v, 198; E. 260(9): *Perfect Occurences of Parliament*, 28 Mar.-4 Apr. 1645; C.J. IV, pp. 91, 93.
103. C.J. IV, pp. 168, 169, 183, 184-5, 193; L.J. VII, pp. 457, 463, 469, 470, 471; *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum 1642-1660*, ed. C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait (London, 1911), I, pp. 726-31.
104. Wither, *Vox Pacifica*, pp. 102-3.
105. For the activities and membership of the accounts sub-committee, Gurney, thesis, pp. 183-9, 376-9.
106. P.R.O. S.P. 28/244 (unfol.), Kingston committee order, 27 Feb. 1645; S.P. 28/252 ff. 18, 52v, 53v; S.P. 28/254 (unfol.), Surrey sub-committee order book I, ff. 9, 9v, 19; S.P. 28/255 (unfol.), list of books and papers received from Major George Wither, 19 Feb.; Committee at Kingston to Grand Committee of Accounts, 7 and 11 Mar.; receipt of William Deane, 16 Apr.
107. B.L. E.298(32): Wither, *Letters of Advice* (2nd edn, 1645), p. 20.
108. C.J. IV, p. 262; B.L. E.298(32).
109. C.J. IV, p. 303; B.L. E.266(30): *Perfect Occurences of Parliament*, 12-19 Dec. 1645.

110. C.J. IV, pp. 378–9. The charges were almost certainly correct. Cf. De Beer, *Diary of John Evelyn*, I, p. 53.
111. G.M.R. Guildford Borough Records, BR/OC/5/21. Cf. *Letter to George Wither*, p. 7. The invitation to Wither may have reflected the grudge between Stoughton and Robert Terry of Guildford, for which see B.L. Add. MS. 45,194 f. 144v; P.R.O. Privy Council Office, Registers, P.C. 2/50 f. 199v; S.P. 16/422/93.
112. *Members of Parliament Returns*, I (London, 1879), p. 846.
113. Wither, *Letters of Advice*, p. 14.
114. Wither, *Vox Pacifica*, pp. 58–9.
115. P.R.O. C.231/6 p. 41. Wither and Lancelot Johnson were removed on 27 Mar. 1646; 7 others were added.
116. Wither, *Justitiarius Justificatus*, pp. 2, 9–11, 13–14.
117. Wither, *Vox Pacifica*, pp. 114–15.
118. Wither, *Justitiarius Justificatus*, p. 7.
119. C.J. IV, p. 505; B.L. Add. MS. 10,114, 10 Apr. 1646; Add. MS. 31,116 f. 264v; E. 506(29): *A Perfect Diurnall*, 6–12 Apr.
120. George Wither, *Opobalsamum Anglicanum: An English Balme* (1646), p. 18.
121. Hist. Mss. Comm., *Fourteenth Report*, Appendix, part IX, p. 495; Patricia Crawford, Denzil, *First Lord Holles* (London, 1979), p. 136.
122. Cf. Valerie Pearl, 'Oliver St John and the "middle group" in the Long Parliament', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, LXXXI (1966), p. 494; David Underdown, *Pride's Purge* (London, 1971), p. 84.
123. C.J. IV, pp. 639–40.
124. B.L. Add. MS. 10,114, 7 Aug. 1646; Add. MS. 31,116 f. 280.
125. C.J. IV, pp. 639–40; B.L. E.350(6): *The Moderate Intelligencer*, 6–13 Aug. 1646, p. 592.
126. C.J. IV, p. 531; B.L. E.509(3): *A Perfect Diurnall*, 4–11 May 1646; Hist. Mss. Comm., 14th Rep., Appx, IX, p. 477. cf. Wither, *Opobalsamum Anglicanum*, p. 22.
127. C.J. IV, pp. 639–40; *Moderate Intelligencer*, 6–13 Aug. 1646; B.L. E.511(29): *A Perfect Diurnall*, 3–10 Aug.; E. 513(3): *Perfect Occurrences of Both Houses*, week ending 14 Aug.
128. B.L. Add. MS. 10,114, 7 Aug. 1646; Add. MS. 31,116 f. 280. cf. Wither, *Echoes*, pp. 131–2.
129. C.J. V, p. 337; B.L. E.518(46): *Perfect Occurrences of Every Dayes Journal*, 15–22 Oct. 1647.
130. P.R.O. S.P. 28/253A Book 6 f. 41; B.L. Landsdowne MS. 846 f. 63. £1,681 15s 8d was the figure arrived at by the Committee of Accounts in Cornhill. Wither estimated that he was owed £2,131 4s 8d, which included £200 interest paid on the £700 loan: SP28/267 ff. 151v–3. tion of the interest to the consideration of the Commons.
131. C.J. V, p. 485; P.R.O. S.P.28/252 f. 166v; Wither, *Petition and Narrative*, p. 3.
132. H.L.R.O. M.P. 1648, 15 Mar., Wither petition; P.R.O. S.P. 23/132 p. 189; Wither, *Echoes*, p. 125.
133. Wither, *Opobalsamum Anglicanum*, pp. 4, 7. Cf. Hill, 'Wither and Milton', p. 138.

134. Wither, *Opobalsamum Anglicanum*, p. 16.
135. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
136. *Ibid.*, p. 15. cf. B.L. E.296(5): [John Lilburne], *The Copy of a Letter* (1645), pp. 14–16.
137. Wither, *Westrow Revived* (1653), pp. 28–31, 44. For financial help from John Bradshaw, see Wither, *Three Grains of Spirituall Frankincense* (1651), pp. 5–6. Wither almost certainly knew Westrow and Dixwell from the time of his service in Kent: P.R.O. S.P.267 f. 146.
138. *Tracts on Liberty in the Puritan Revolution*, ed. W. Haller (New York, 1934), pp. 291–3. cf. Norbrook, 'Levelling Poetry', pp. 244–5.
139. B.L. E.302(5): *England's Miserie and Remedie* (1645), p. 8. cf. *Divine Right and Democracy*, ed. D. Wotton (Harmondsworth, 1986), pp. 52–4.
140. Wither, *Justitarius Justificatus*, p. 14.
141. H.L.R.O. M.P. 1648, 15 March, Wither petition.
142. George Wither, *Carmen Eucharisticon: A Private Thank-Oblation* (1649).
143. Wither, *Campo-Musae*, p. 11.
144. Wither, *Vox Pacifica*, pp. 138, 140. cf. *Speech Without Doore*, p. 10; *Opobalsamum Anglicanum*, pp. 16–17.
145. George Wither, *Prosopopoeia Britannica: Britans Genius, or a Good-Angel, personated* (1648), pp. 50, 84. cf. Norbrook, 'Levelling Poetry', pp. 253–5.
146. Wither, *Prosopopoeia Britannica*, p. 101.
147. Wither, *A Cordial Confection* (1659), p. 31 for these doubts.
148. B.L. E.572(15): *Mercurius Elenticus*, 27 Aug.–3 Sept. 1649, for comments on Wither's *Carmen Eucharisticon*: 'hee has flattered the Saints very artificially, in hopes to get his Arreares'.
149. Allan Pritchard, 'George Wither and the Sale of the Estate of Charles I', *Modern Philology*, LXXVII (1980), pp. 370–81.
150. Wither, *British Appeals*, p. 2.
151. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
152. P.R.O. S.P. 28/214 (unfol.), warrant to Henry Wilcock, 15 June 1649; B.L. E.1238(4): *The Names of the Justices of Peace . . . Michaelmas Terme 1650* (1650).
153. For Onslow as a committee-man, P.R.O. S.P. 28/214 (unfol.), warrants to Henry Wilcock, 1 Feb. and 10 Sep. 1649; for Onslow as an active JP, P.R.O. Assizes, Home Circuit, Indictments, ASSI. 35/93/5; 35/94/7; 35/94/8; 35/95/8; for changes in Surrey's administration, Gurney, thesis, pp. 212–15.
154. Wither, *Petition and Narrative*, pp. 2–7; *idem*, *Epistolium-Vagum-Prosa-Metricum* (1659), pp. 3–10.
155. Wither, *Cordial Confection*, p. 26. cf. Norbrook, "'Safest in Storms'", for Wither's writings of the 1650s.
156. C.J. VIII, pp. 394–5; Hist. Mss. Comm., 15th Rep., Appx, VII, p. 93; G. M. R. E List 313; 173/3/3.
157. Hist. Mss. Comm., 14th Rep., Appx, IX, p. 477.